

SECOND QUARTER REPORT

Foster Care Ombudsman

October 2024 - December 2024





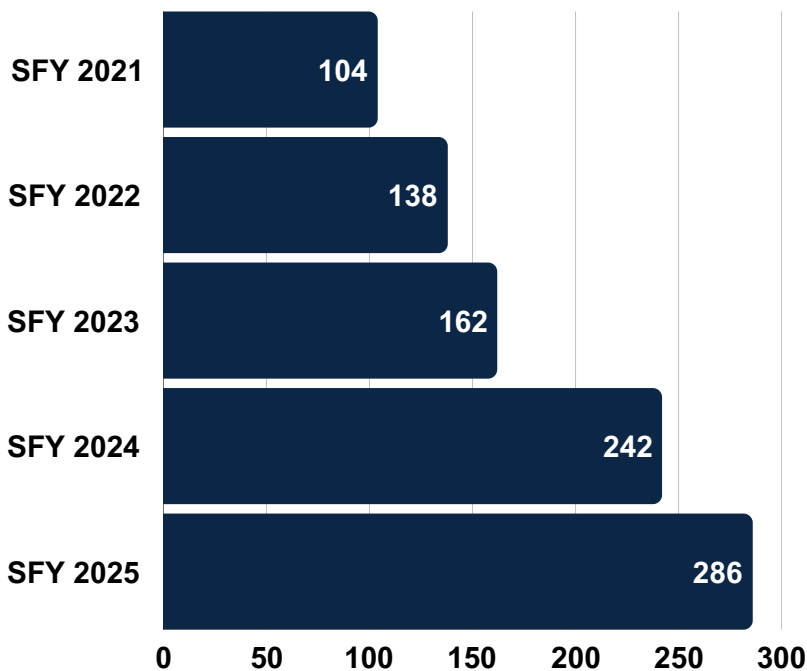
The Foster Care Ombudsman (FCO) division operates under the Office of Inspector General. Its mission is to receive and investigate concerns and complaints from foster children, foster parents, kinship caregivers, and other stakeholders regarding the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Based on its findings, the Foster Care Ombudsman makes recommendations for systemic reform.

Complainant Count by Month and Quarter

In the second quarter of the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2025, the Foster Care Ombudsman received requests for assistance from 286 individual complainants. The data below reflects the number of complainants by month and quarter for SFY 2025. Unless otherwise specified, the complaint data in this report pertains to complaints that were closed and completed as of December 31, 2024.

Complainant Count by Month and Quarter SFY 2025												
2024						2025						
Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	SFY End Running Total
81	95	65	114	89	83							
Quarter 1			Quarter 2			Quarter 3			Quarter 4			Total
241			286									527

Second Quarter Contacts Per SFY



The bar chart on the left compares the number of individuals who received assistance during the second quarter of each SFY. There has been a steady increase in the number of individuals assisted each year.

While weather conditions may affect outreach activities during the second quarter, particularly due to travel constraints, this does not impact the Foster Care Ombudsman division, as it is available year-round to provide virtual presentations. To request a presentation, please complete the [presentation request form](#).



Complaint Count by Complaint Theme

The FCO categorizes requests for assistance into several groups based on the type of complaint, the level of intervention required, and the resolution achieved. Complaints that fall into the "Not Applicable" category usually involve situations where the complainant could not be contacted after their initial request for assistance, or where the complainant withdrew their case after reaching a resolution, prior to the Ombudsman's investigation or involvement.

When individuals contact the FCO, they often submit multiple complaints. In this quarter, the FCO division received assistance requests from 286 individual complainants. However, a total of 448 specific complaints were actually investigated by the FCO division, categorized under the primary, secondary, or tertiary complaint themes.

Complaint Count by Closure Type

The FCO has effectively addressed all assistance requests, organizing them based on the type of resolution achieved. The information provided on the right outlines the characteristics of complaints at the time they were closed. Complaints that involved intervention or investigation by the FCO are classified as either substantiated or unsubstantiated.

This quarter, the FCO substantiated 112 out of the 448 complaints reviewed. Cases may be substantiated if there are significant delays in the child's case processing and procedures, or if there is a deviation from applicable policies, procedures, or laws.

Finally, the three cases classified as "Declined by the FCO" are in accordance with the W. Va. Code §16B-16-2(c). The FCO may decline to take on various cases when they have already conducted thorough investigations into similar cases, and there is no new information available to alter the original case determination.

Complaint Count by Complaint Theme				
Complaint Theme	Q1	Q2	Total	Percent
Action/Inaction of Agency/Employee	66	101	167	20.0%
Placement of Children	72	62	134	16.0%
Financial Issue/Reimbursement	31	63	94	11.2%
Lack of Communication	72	69	141	16.8%
Policy/Regulation Issue	18	14	32	3.8%
Decision of Agency Employee	25	39	64	7.6%
Not Applicable	10	9	19	2.3%
Removal of Children	16	26	42	5.0%
Rude/Unfair Treatment	22	17	39	4.7%
Threat/Retaliatory Treatment	8	9	17	2.0%
Information and/or Referral to Resources	49	39	88	10.5%
Total	389	448	837	
Percent of Total Complaints	46.5%	53.5%		100%

Complaint Count by Closure Type				
Closure	Q1	Q2	SFY Total	Percent
Declined by FCO	3	4	7	0.8%
Information & Referral to Resources	119	100	219	26.2%
Research Only	0	0	0	0%
Substantiated	69	112	181	21.6%
Unable to Contact	21	21	42	5.0%
Unable to Determine Substantiation due to Lack of Information	6	13	19	2.3%
Unsubstantiated	161	188	351	41.9%
Withdrawn by Complainant	10	10	20	2.4%
Total	389	448	837	100%



Complainant Count by the Bureau for Social Services (BSS) Program

The Complainant Count by BSS Program data shows the number of complaints related to specific BSS programs. Complaints categorized as "Not Applicable" involve issues that do not pertain to BSS. In future reports, the FCO division plans to introduce more detailed categories to better capture additional complaints within this dataset. For instance, the three complaints classified as Non-BSS complaints include one regarding a Child Placing Agency and another regarding a child who was not in BSS custody.

Complainant Count By Bureau for Social Services (BSS) Case County

The Foster Care Ombudsman gathers data during the intake process, which includes information about the complainant's county. Additionally, data is collected on the case county, which refers to the county where the child's Bureau of Social Services (BSS) case is based. When analyzing the total number of complaints by county, it is crucial to recognize that each county has unique characteristics, including its population, demographics, and the number of child abuse and neglect petitions filed.

These five counties included in this quarterly report account for 32.5% of the overall cases and investigations handled by the FCO division. These counties with the highest complaint numbers this quarter do not necessarily indicate systemic issues.

Complainant Case Count by BSS Program				
Bureau for Social Services Program	Q1	Q2	SFY Total	Percent
Adoption	6	6	12	2.3%
Centralized Intake (Abuse & Neglect Hotline)	0	4	4	0.8%
Child Protective Services	178	214	392	74.4%
Homefinding	17	7	24	4.6%
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children	7	1	8	1.5%
Institutional Investigative Unit	4	6	10	1.9%
Legal Guardianship	4	16	20	3.8%
Post-Adoption	7	4	11	2.1%
Youth Services	5	2	7	1.3%
Not Applicable	10	21	31	5.9%
Non-BSS	3	5	8	1.51%
Total	241	286	527	100%

Note: The federal Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children regulates the placement of children in other states. The Institutional Investigative Unit within BSS is responsible for investigating cases of child abuse and neglect in residential facilities, schools, and foster homes.

Counties with Highest Complaint Count		
County	Q2	Percent
Kanawha	32	11.2%
Marion	20	7.0%
Wood	16	5.6%
Cabell	13	4.5%
Raleigh	12	4.2%
Total	93	32.5%



This data may represent past or ongoing outreach efforts from the FCO division, which could have enhanced educational awareness about the FCO's role and functions within that county. As a result, this may have led to an increase in the number of complaints filed by stakeholders or families in those areas.

The numbers listed below indicate the number of cases handled by the FCO division from each county during this quarter, presented in alphabetical order.





Complaint Count by BSS Case County				
County	Q1	Q2	SFY Total	Percent
Barbour	3	9	12	2.30%
Berkeley	5	6	11	2.10%
Boone	3	1	4	0.80%
Braxton	2	6	8	1.50%
Brooke	0	1	1	0.20%
Cabell	11	13	24	4.60%
Calhoun	1	1	2	0.40%
Clay	2	0	2	0.40%
Doddridge	1	4	5	1.00%
Fayette	9	8	17	3.20%
Gilmer	3	1	4	0.80%
Grant	0	1	1	0.20%
Greenbrier	3	4	7	1.30%
Hampshire	4	2	6	1.10%
Hancock	2	4	6	1.10%
Hardy	0	1	1	0.20%
Harrison	8	10	18	3.40%
Jackson	4	7	11	2.10%
Jefferson	8	4	12	2.30%
Kanawha	33	32	65	12.30%
Lewis	7	8	15	2.90%
Lincoln	1	2	3	0.60%
Logan	4	7	11	2.10%
Marion	16	20	36	6.80%
Marshall	0	5	5	1.00%
Mason	2	3	5	1.00%
McDowell	2	4	6	1.10%
Mercer	13	8	21	4.00%
Mineral	0	1	1	0.20%

Complaint Count by BSS Case County				
County	Q1	Q2	SFY Total	Percent
Mingo	5	5	10	1.90%
Monongalia	6	7	13	2.50%
Monroe	1	1	2	0.40%
Morgan	0	2	2	0.40%
Nicholas	9	2	11	2.10%
Ohio	2	8	10	1.90%
Pendleton	0	0	0	0%
Pleasants	0	1	1	0.20%
Pocahontas	2	1	3	0.60%
Preston	9	8	17	3.20%
Putnam	6	6	12	2.30%
Raleigh	1	12	13	2.50%
Randolph	6	3	9	1.70%
Ritchie	4	0	4	0.80%
Roane	2	3	5	1.00%
Summers	2	0	2	0.40%
Taylor	7	8	15	2.90%
Tucker	1	2	3	0.60%
Tyler	1	0	1	0.20%
Upshur	2	1	3	0.60%
Wayne	2	3	5	1.00%
Webster	1	4	5	1.00%
Wetzel	4	7	11	2.10%
Wirt	0	1	1	0.20%
Wood	11	16	27	5.10%
Wyoming	1	2	3	0.60%
Not Applicable	7	5	12	2.30%
Out of State	2	4	6	1.10%
Statewide	0	1	1	0.20%
Total	241	286	527	100%

THANK YOU



Contact Us

-  304-558-1117
-  Request for Assistance Form
-  FosterCareOmbudsman@wv.gov
-  OIG Foster Care Ombudsman